

A few months ago, even voters in blue New York rejected multiple ballot measures to soften up election laws the way liberal activists prefer. This fake outrage is just a predicate for Washington Democrats to do something they have sought to do literally for years: appoint themselves a nationwide board of elections on steroids.

This is the takeover that Democrats have sought for multiple years, using multiple different justifications. It is not a voting rights bill. It is a sprawling, sweeping takeover of our democracy. Our colleagues' bill would do things like forcing all 50 States—all of them—to legalize corrupt ballot harvesting. They would have the government send public funds directly to political campaigns.

The same Attorney General who has frivolously sued Texas just to placate the White House, whose Department of Justice tries to intimidate parents, would be handed new power to micro-manage election law.

Some early drafts of this bill tried to literally, openly turn the Federal Election Commission into an outright partisan body. Talk about tipping your hand.

These changes wouldn't bolster faith in our democracy or in our institutions. It would do exactly the opposite. It would be a civic wrecking ball. And, listen, that is before you consider that Senate Democrats want to destroy our own institution to ram this through.

The current Senate Democratic leader once said that nuking filibuster rules would be a "doomsday for democracy." Just a few years ago, more than 30 Senate Democrats joined a bipartisan letter supporting the legislative filibuster.

President Biden defended the principle in long, passionate speeches throughout his entire career. Just last year, as President, he repeated that destroying the filibuster would "throw the entire Congress into chaos." He certainly was right about that.

There is no partial or limited nuclear option on the table. As the Senator for West Virginia put it yesterday, whenever you start talking about carving things out, you end up eating the entire turkey.

No party that would trash the Senate's legislative traditions can be trusted to seize control over election laws all across America. Nobody who is this desperate to take over our democracy on a one-party basis can be allowed to do it.

Finally, it is beyond distasteful for some of our colleagues to ham-fistedly invoke the January 6 anniversary to advance these aims. Washington Democrats have been trying to seize control over elections for years. Their first draft of the legislation at hand was introduced in January of 2019. The fact that violent criminals broke the law does not entitle Senate Democrats to break the Senate.

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ten to this—to justify breaking rules to grab outcomes they have not earned.

I am going to say that again. It is surreal to hear sitting Senators invoke January the 6th to justify breaking the rules to grab outcomes they have not earned.

It is surreal to hear sitting Senators invoke January the 6th to argue that institutions can be trampled because they would like a different result.

A year ago, the Senate didn't bend and it didn't break. We held strong. It is jaw-dropping for colleagues to propose to commemorate that by breaking the Senate themselves in a different way.

A year ago, there was a lot of talk on this floor about protecting the norms and institutions of our democracy by putting long-term bipartisan traditions ahead of short-term partisan power. Someday soon, it appears, we may learn which of us, actually, really meant it.

FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. President, now, on another matter, over the holidays, Russian President Vladimir Putin's insatiable and unreasonable demands only grew. So did Russia's threat to Ukraine, Europe, NATO, and our own interests. Putin cannot be allowed to use force or the threat of force to further erode Ukraine's territorial integrity. The West cannot be bullied into betraying our friends, forgetting our principles, or accepting a Russian sphere of influence.

Freedom's friends will either stand up to the bully while we have a chance or we will rue the day we did not, whether in Europe, Asia, or elsewhere. If Putin walks away from this self-created crisis feeling emboldened, he and others will run the same play again and again and again.

It is appropriate for the administration and our allies to seek to deescalate the situation, but not at the expense of deterrence and not by throwing our friends' security under the bus.

And if we don't make sure our allies and partners have a seat at the table, they may well end up on the menu. For Putin, this is not just about Ukraine. This is about breaking NATO and Europe and restoring Russian domination of its neighbors.

I support President Biden's stated desire to deter further Russian aggression against Ukraine. But—but—his administration must move faster to provide emergency military capabilities to help Ukraine defend themselves and deter attacks.

Time is of the essence. Moving at the speed of bureaucracy is simply not going to cut it. Neither will waiting until Russia escalates, at which point, of course, it would be too late. Because this is not merely about Ukraine, President Biden must also work with NATO allies to reinforce our collective military position on the continent.

We have to reassure our eastern flank NATO allies and deter any threats to the alliance by dem-

onstrating that 30 nations are both willing and able to uphold article 5. The Russians have to believe that.

The President, with bipartisan support, has threatened sanctions against Russia. European allies must show that they, too, will impose significant sanctions on Moscow for any additional aggression against Ukraine.

Even if this crisis abates, the long-term threat from revisionist powers like Russia and China isn't going anywhere. These countries literally want to redraw world maps and rewrite international rules through force or the threat of force. So this is why the United States must be as serious about modernizing our military as our adversaries are about modernizing theirs.

While the Biden administration talks a good game about competing with China, their first budget proposed to cut defense spending in real terms, especially significant given their runaway inflation. We cannot shirk on investing in our military.

And our friends and allies must also pull their weight. NATO's 2 percent pledge from 2014 is not sufficient for the threat we face in 2022. But key NATO partners have still not met even that commitment.

Europe must also reassess energy and environmental policies that have purchased a green veneer at the expense of more dependence on Russia and more leverage for Moscow. This should begin with abandoning the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. The United States, NATO, and all our partners can either act now or, believe me, we will live to regret it.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

ANNIVERSARY OF JANUARY 6

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, earlier this morning, I had the opportunity to join my colleagues in the Senate Rules Committee for a hearing on the progress our Capitol has made to increase the security of this complex in the aftermath of January 6.

We heard testimony from U.S. Capitol Chief of Police Thomas Manger, who in his first 6 months has done an outstanding job to make this building safer and better prepared for the sorts of horrors that befell this hallowed space only 1 year ago this week.

That day, on January 6, 2021, the men and women of our Capitol Police stood on the frontlines of the unimaginable: a violent assault upon the U.S. Capitol instigated by former President Trump and carried out by a mob of radicals looking to halt the peaceful transfer of power. That day, our Capitol policemen were outnumbered and underequipped. Yet their bravery and quick thinking saved many lives and prevented a violent riot from becoming something even worse. Today, we honor all those who stepped up that day, especially those whom we have lost in the aftermath.

In the year since that attack, we have gotten a lot of things done in the Senate to strengthen our Capitol Police Force, to ensure from a security

standpoint that the violence of that day never happens again. Thanks to this work and to the new leadership of the Capitol Police, the U.S. Capitol today is undoubtedly considerably safer than it was a year ago.

But let's be clear. Let's be very clear. January 6 was not merely a senseless act of violence; it was an attempt to reverse through violent means the outcome of a free and a fair election. And make no mistake, the root cause of January 6 is still with us today. It lives on through the Big Lie pushed by Donald Trump that is undermining faith in our political system and making our country and our democracy less safe.

A year after January 6, the biggest threat to our Capitol, our Capitol Police, and our democracy today is the Big Lie perpetrated by Donald Trump. Without addressing the root causes of the event of January 6, the insurrection will not be an aberration; it could well become the norm.

Just like the Senate has the power to pass legislation supporting our Capitol Police Force, we have the same power and obligation to pass legislation to address these root causes that brought the Big Lie to life. That is what my Senate colleagues and I are focused on and are committed to doing. We must act.

More than any other point in recent history, threats of political violence are on the rise. Election administrators are facing harassment and even death threats for just carrying out their duties. These are people who are sort of like civil servants. They are simply in charge of making sure the vote is counted fairly and accurately. In many States like mine, they are bipartisan. In some States, they are non-partisan. But they are simply doing a job to make sure that the vote is counted correctly. Yet there are death threats against them for doing just that. By one measure, nearly one-third of these election officials say they feel less safe on the job, and many are quitting in fear of their safety.

All of us have a role to play to protect our democratic system—everyone from our Capitol Police to the voting public, to those of us entrusted to serve in elected office.

Mr. President, just as the Capitol Police have taken the experience of January 6 to institute reforms for the future, every Member of the U.S. Senate is called to do the same, to reckon with the lessons of that terrible day and take action to cure America of the disease of the Big Lie. That means passing legislation to protect our democracy from subversion and safeguard the right to vote, including the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act.

Last year, Senate Democrats tried multiple times to get voting rights passed with bipartisan cooperation. Many of us—especially my colleague Senator MANCHIN—tried in good faith to bring the other side to the table. But every single time, Republicans

mounted a partisan filibuster to stop this Chamber from even having a debate on these measures.

By now, Republicans have made it abundantly clear that bipartisanship is not an option when it comes to voting rights. That is against the grand tradition where the Voting Rights Act had gotten the support of President Reagan and President H. W. Bush and President Bush and got large bipartisan margins when it was renewed in the past. That is not true anymore. This is a new Republican Party under Donald Trump, and they are opposing any attempt—any attempt—to strengthen voting rights.

If this continues, the only option left for Democrats is to explore and propose reasonable fixes to restore the Senate so we can get these critical pieces of legislation passed into law. We will consider proposals to restore the Senate on or before January 17.

The Republican leader has wasted no opportunity to criticize any discussion—even a discussion—on how Members of this body can act to restore the Senate to its proper function. Mere moments ago, the Republican leader strangely suggested that to make this Chamber better debate, compromise, and pass legislation somehow equates to breaking the Senate. He criticized the idea that Democrats would go at it alone. But I would remind everyone that when Leader MCCONNELL and Republicans were in the majority, they used their simple majority for almost every major initiative they wished to put in place: the repeal of the Affordable Care Act, passing a multitrillion-dollar tax break for the ultrarich, and installing three rightwing Supreme Court Justices. They were happy to change the rules if it meant getting their picks confirmed to the Court.

So let's stop the crocodile tears right here and right now. The asymmetry cannot hold. If Senate Republicans continue to abuse the filibuster to prevent this body from acting, the Senate must adapt. Just as Robert C. Byrd said, when circumstances change, the rules should change.

There is no better way to heal the damage of January 6 than to act so that our constitutional order is preserved for the future. We must do so by any means that we can, even if it means Democrats find alternative paths forward on our own. For the sake of the vision handed down to us by the Framers, Democrats are going to continue this work in the weeks to come.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, November 9, 2020, was the first day that the Senate was in session following the Presidential election that year. Six days had passed since the polls had closed. It had been 2 days since enough votes were tallied for the Associated Press and TV networks, including FOX, to conclude that Joe Biden was elected President of the United States. But in-

side the White House, former President Donald Trump was busy. He was tweeting a torrent of lies and conspiracy theories to deny the obvious. He was ready to pull the White House and the people's house, this U.S. Capitol, down around him in order to overturn an election he had lost.

Never before—never in the history of the United States—has a President or Presidential candidate shown such utter contempt for the will of the American people or for the peaceful transition of power in a democracy. Yet, when the Senate convened 6 days after the election, some of our Republican colleagues actually offered excuses for the poor feelings and the attitude and the demeanor of the former President and his incendiary actions.

The Republican Senate leader, who was on the floor a few minutes ago, defended President Trump at that time, saying that he was “100 percent within his right to pursue recounts and litigation.”

Never mind that the lawsuits were based on the same lies that former President Trump was spewing. Over the next few weeks, those lawsuits were initiated.

What was the final score? So 64 of the 65 legal challenges brought by the Trump campaign to dismiss the results of the election were dismissed themselves as meritless, many by judges that Donald Trump had appointed.

Also on November 9, a person identified only as “a senior Republican official” told a Washington Post reporter something that is chilling. Speaking about the defeated President Trump lashing out with poisonous lies and conspiracy theories, this nameless Republican asked: “Well, what's the downside for humoring him for a little bit of time? No one seriously thinks the results will change.”

This unnamed Republican official went on to say: “He went golfing this weekend. It's not like he's plotting how to prevent Joe Biden from taking power on January 20. He's tweeting about filing some lawsuits. The lawsuits will fail, then he'll tweet some more on how the election was stolen, then he'll leave.”

That was the Republican attitude toward President Trump after the election results were in. In fact, we know now that plotting to prevent Joe Biden from taking power on January 20 was exactly what Donald Trump was up to. He abused the powers of his office to exert extraordinary pressure on the Justice Department.

I know this because I was in the actual deposition in the Judiciary Committee, which I chair, when those in the Justice Department who were contacted by the President for this purpose testified under oath.

Politicians and elected officials in key States were also contacted by President Trump. And the Vice President was drawn into the President's plans to nullify an American election. We came perilously close to losing our democracy at that point.

It survives today only because men and women of conscience—Democrats and Republicans—refused to cooperate with the former President.

As it became apparent that he could not contort the bureaucracy to nullify the election, and it wasn't working in the courts either, Donald Trump turned to a weapon—a desperate weapon—seldom used in American history: political violence.

On December 19, 2020, Trump tweeted: “Big protest in DC on January 6. Be there. WILL BE WILD!”

That was one of the several tweets he sent out summoning his followers to Washington.

On January 5, 2021, a year ago today, Steve Bannon, once one of Trump's chief strategists, then discarded, then embraced—I can't keep track—he is now back in the Trump fold. He used his podcast on that day, a year ago today, to telegraph the chaos that was going to erupt the next day.

Steve Bannon told his listeners: “We're going into something that's never happened before in American history,” he said that a year ago, “It's not going to happen like you think it's going to happen. Okay, it's going to be quite extraordinarily different.”

Bannon said: “All I can say is strap in. . . . It's all converging, and now we're on the point of attack tomorrow.”

That is a quote from Steve Bannon, a year ago today, about January 6, 2021. I don't have to remind anyone what happened that day. Many of us lived it. Some may try to downplay it or deny it was any threat. They know better. They know the truth.

If you were sitting in this Chamber, with Vice President Pence sitting in your chair, preparing to count the electoral vote to determine the President of the United States, and you noted the Vice President's staff come roaring through that door, reach up and grab him by the arms, and pull him off the podium where you are now sitting—people were dumbstruck. They couldn't imagine what was going on here for a moment. And then to have a member of the Capitol Police come before us and stand where you are seated and to announce that this was going to be the safe room in the Capitol—they were going to start bringing staff members in to line the backs of the floor here because this was a safe place to be, and we should just sit tight and be quiet.

Well, then we started hearing the roar outside, as the mob was descending on this building. And within 10 minutes, another member of the Capitol Police stood where you are sitting right now and said: Evacuate the Chamber as quickly as possible. Leave through these doors in an orderly fashion.

That was the reality of life in the Capitol and the business of the Senate when the mob—the Trump mob—descended on January 6. We saw what happened. Many of us left and had to follow it by videos that were taken and

photos later of people who were assaulted. When it was all over, five people died, and 140 members of law enforcement were assaulted and victimized and physically attacked.

Those who dismiss it or don't want to talk about it on the floor have to accept the reality; the reality was there was death and violence against law enforcement officials that day. And the notion that somehow all of these people carrying Trump signs and banners were actually Democrats—what were they thinking? To believe that for a moment is to be totally deluded when it comes to the truth.

So what has happened since? The largest criminal prosecution in the history of the United States has ensued. All of those videotapes that were taken by the participants and others in the course of this insurrectionist mob have been used to establish evidence to bring criminal charges against more than 700 individuals, some of whom are already serving time in prison for what they did that day, and it is not over. It is anticipated that another 300 will be charged, some with even more serious crimes.

This was no minor incident or, as a Republican Congressman from Georgia said, “just tourists visiting the Capitol.” No, it was a deadly moment. People died as a result of what happened that day. People have been changed forever as a result of what happened that day. It was for real.

Today, the windows and furniture that were shattered by the rioters have been replaced. The National Guard members have gone home. Thank goodness the security fence around the Capitol is finally down, but there are many invisible scars from January 6. Five police officers who battled the mob died. More than 140 were wounded.

And the Big Lie of the stolen election that Trump used to summon his mob continues to metastasize. Over the last year, Republican lawmakers across the country have used this Big Lie as a pretext to pass laws to make it more difficult for Americans to vote.

The Republican leader came to the floor and said 94 percent of the people who voted in the last Presidential election said it was easy. Well, I am sure that is true. It was the largest turnout since 1900.

But what has happened in almost 20 states since then? Those State legislatures controlled by the Republican Party have tried to make it more difficult in the next election for the same people to vote. That is a fact.

And Americans now distrust our elections. More now believe that political violence is acceptable, and that has to change. Our democracy cannot endure with these cancers spreading.

Abraham Lincoln called American democracy “the last best hope on Earth.” This last year has taught us that it may be the last best hope, but it is fragile. Our generation—every generation—has to be willing to fight to protect it. For the sake of our

forbearers, who gave us this democracy, and for our children and grandchildren, who will inherit its future, I am begging my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to condemn what happened in this Chamber on January 6, 2021, and to make it clear, once and for all, on a bipartisan basis that we stand together, united, for this democracy to succeed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

Mr. THUNE. I ask unanimous consent that I be able to complete my remarks before the vote gets underway.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection.

FILIBUSTER

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I had hoped we had put the idea of changing the Senate filibuster rule to bed when two Members of the Democratic Party in the Senate pledged to oppose any attempt to abolish the filibuster, but, unfortunately, the Democrat leader has revived this idea and has said that he plans to hold a vote on changing the filibuster rule on or before January 17.

Democrats have offered a lot of bad ideas over the past year—a lot of bad ideas. But it is possible that abolishing the filibuster is by far the worst. Abolishing the filibuster would mean fundamentally changing the character of the Senate and removing one of the most significant protections for minority rights in our system of government.

Our Founders recognized that it wasn't just Kings who could be tyrants. They knew majorities could be tyrants, too, and that a majority, if unchecked, could trample the rights of the minority.

And so the Founders combined majority rule with both representation and constitutional protections for the minority. They established safeguards, checks and balances throughout our government, to keep the government in check and ensure that the rights of the minority were protected. And one of those safeguards was the U.S. Senate.

In the House of Representatives, majority rule is emphasized, and the Founders could have left it at that. They could have stuck with a single legislative body. But they didn't. Why? Because they were worried about the possibility of tyrannical majorities in the House endangering the rights of the minority.

The author of Federalist 62 notes:

A senate, as a second branch of the legislative assembly, distinct from and dividing the power with, a first, must be in all cases a salutary check on the government. It doubles the security to the people, by requiring the concurrence of two distinct bodies in schemes of usurpation or perfidy. . . .

Secondly. The necessity of a senate is not less indicated by the propensity of all single and numerous assemblies, to yield to the impulse of sudden and violent passions, and to be seduced by factious leaders, into intemperate and pernicious resolutions.

That is from the author of Federalist 62.

So the Founders created the Senate as a check on the House of Representatives. They made the Senate smaller